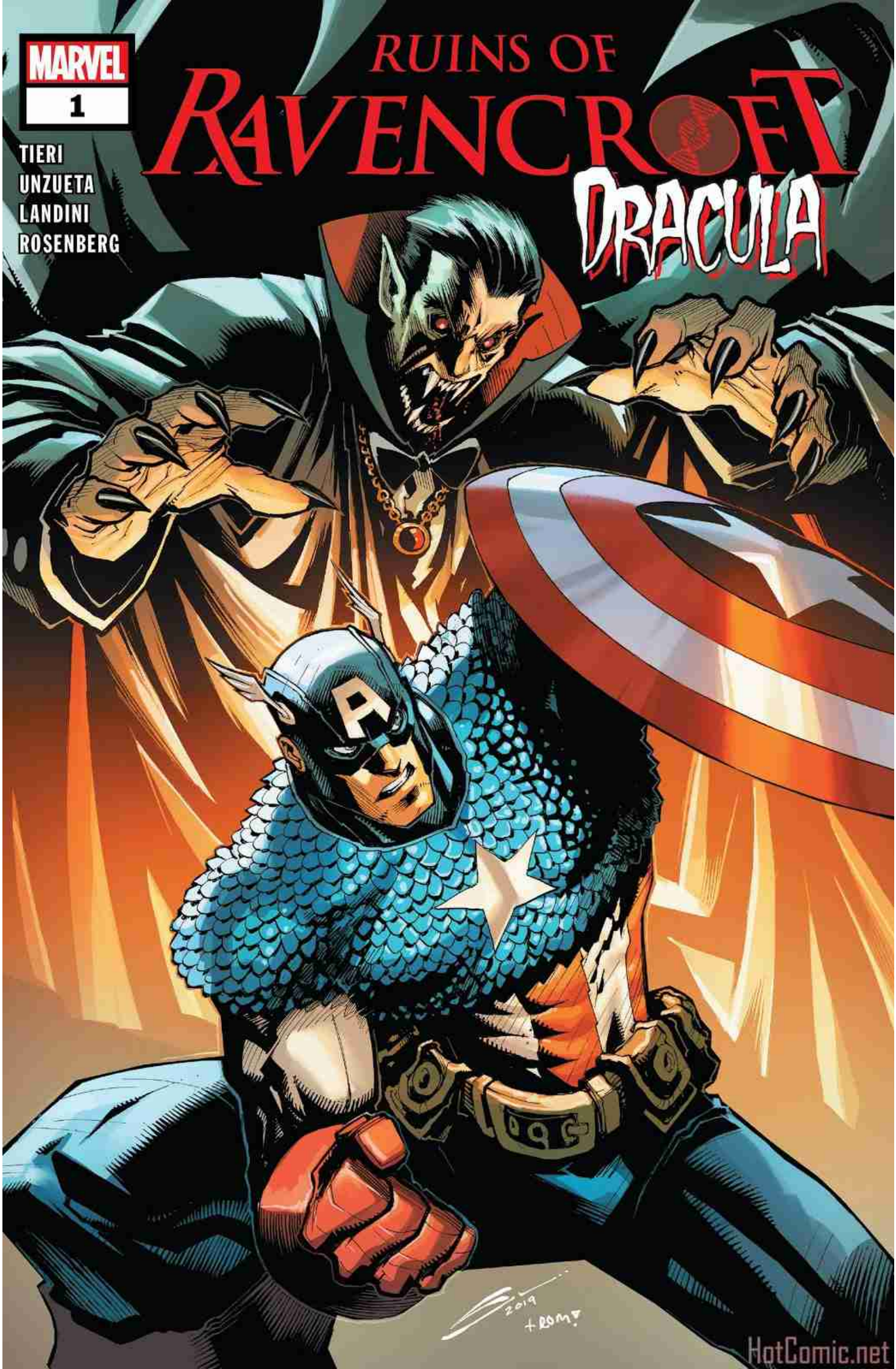

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RUINS OF RAVENCROFT

DRACULA

AFTER THE EVENTS OF ABSOLUTE CARNAGE, THE RAVENCROFT INSTITUTE FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE HAS BEEN DECIMATED...AND ALL ITS SECRETS ARE SPILLING OUT.

WITH JONAS RAVENCROFT'S JOURNAL DISCOVERED BENEATH THE RUBBLE, MAYOR WILSON FISK, JOHN JAMESON, MISTY KNIGHT AND REED RICHARDS HAVE DESCENDED BELOW THE ORIGINAL INSTITUTE AND STUMBLED UPON THE UNWANTED. THESE GROTESQUE CREATURES ATTACKED THE GROUP ONCE UNLEASHED BUT WERE CONTAINED BACK WITHIN THEIR PRISON.

THOUGH THERE MAY BE MORE SECRETS THAT RAVENCROFT IS WITHHOLDING FROM THE GROUP...

FRANK TIERI ... WRITER

ANGEL UNZUETA ... ARTIST (MODERN DAY)

STEFANO LANDINI ... ARTIST (FLASHBACK)

RACHELLE ROSENBERG ... COLORIST

VC's TRAVIS LANHAM ... LETTERER

GERARDO SANDOVAL & ROMULO FAJARDO JR. COVER ARTISTS

GREG LAND, JAY LEISTEN & FRANK D'ARMATA VARIANT COVER ARTISTS

ANTHONY GAMBINO GRAPHIC DESIGNER

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C.B. CEBULSKI EDITOR IN CHIEF

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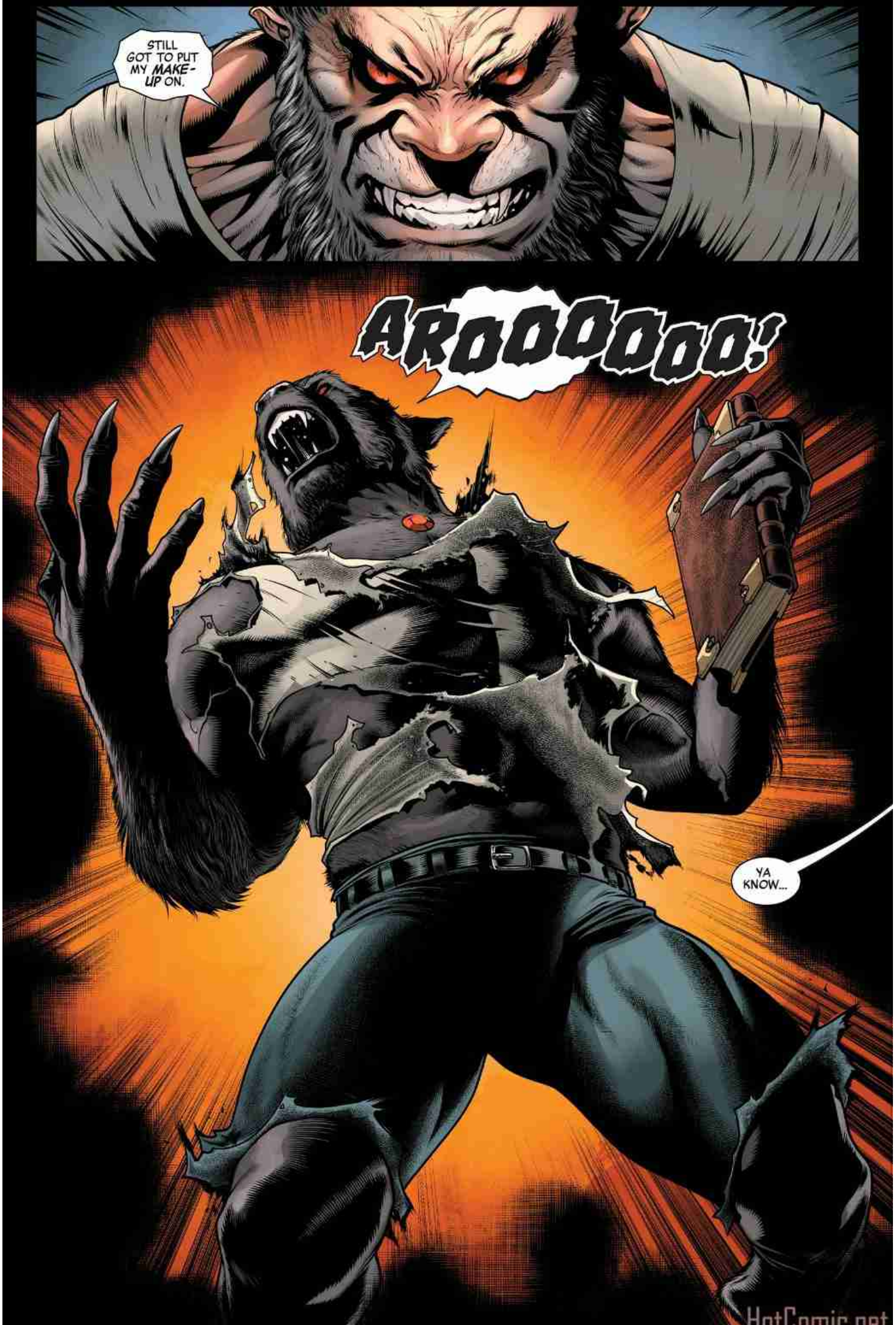

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...I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER REALLY GET USED TO THAT.
Luke Cage.
REALLY? 'CAUSE CONSIDERING I'M HERE WITH AN EX-CON WITH STEEL-HARD SKIN, A WOMAN WITH A BIONIC ARM, A MYSTICAL MARTIAL ARTS DUDE WHO CAN PUNCH HOLES IN WALLS AND A MAN MADE OUT OF PLASTIC...
...WEREWOLF ACTUALLY SEEMS PRETTY DAMNED MUNDANE IF YOU ASK ME.
HELL, I'VE EVEN BEEN ONE ONCE. ASK MISTY.
Iron Fist.
Danny Rand.
Misty Knight.
Falcon.
Sam Wilson.
Mr. Fantastic.
Reed Richards.
Man-Wolf.
John Jameson.
HE'S RIGHT. BUT MUNDANE AIN'T THE WORD I'D USE TO DESCRIBE ANY OF THIS...WHICH IS WHY I CALLED YOU ALL HERE.
AND IT CERTAINLY AIN'T THE WORD I'D USE TO DESCRIBE WHAT'S WAITING FOR US ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS...

...DOOR?
EMPTY? THIS SEEMS HIGHLY IMPLAUSIBLE CONSIDERING WHAT WE EXPERIENCED HERE THE OTHER DAY.
BUT DID WE EXPERIENCE IT? I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER...
OH, I'M QUITE SURE THE EXPERIENCE YOU DESCRIBED HAPPENED.

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Winter Soldier.
James "Bucky" Barnes.
BECAUSE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CREATURES LABELED THE UNWANTED AND THE MESSED-UP HISTORY HERE IN RAVENCROFT...
...I DON'T NEED A BOOK OR YOUR EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS TO TELL ME THAT THEY'RE ALL TOO REAL.
The Unwanted
BECAUSE I WAS THERE.

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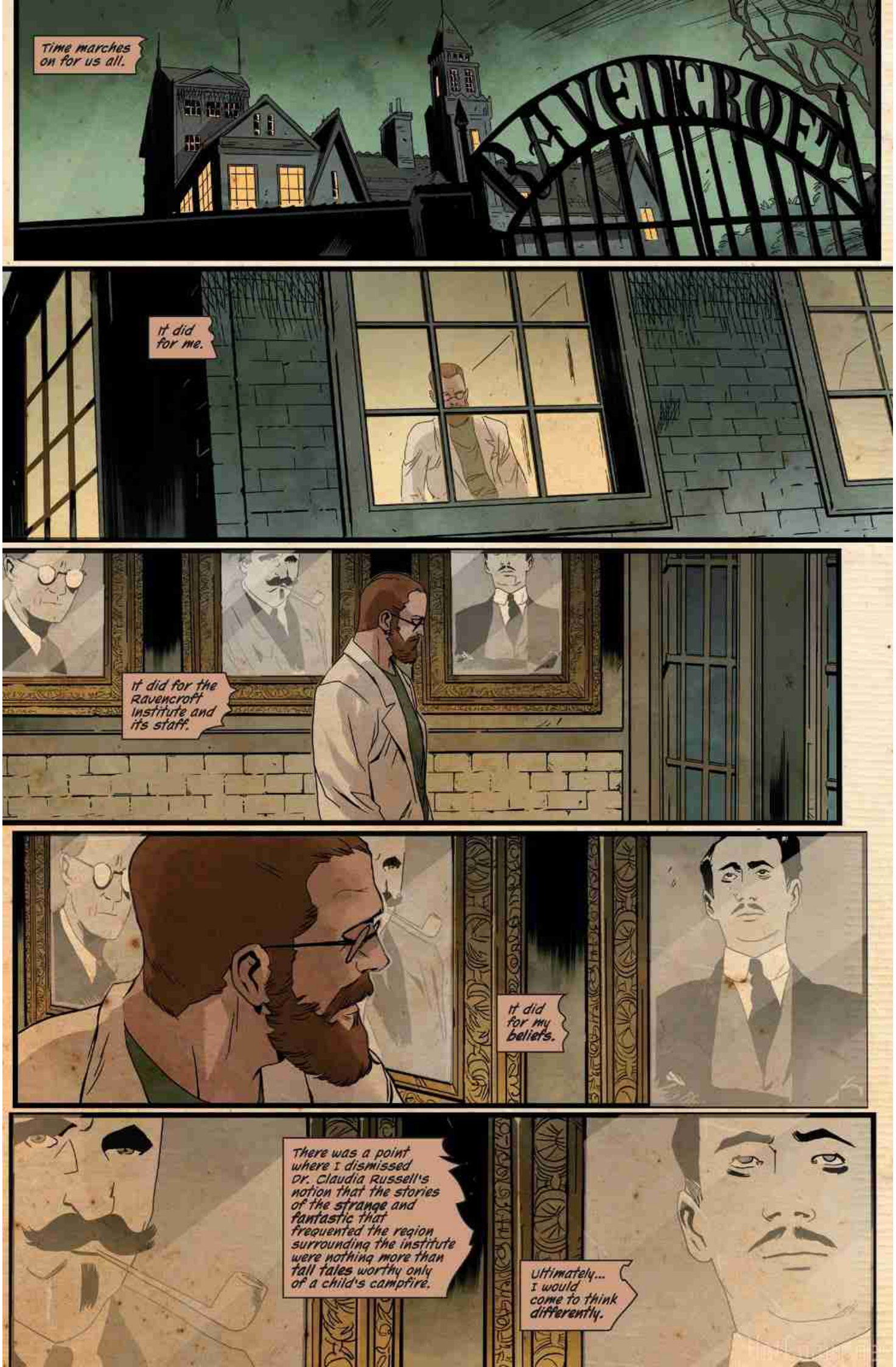
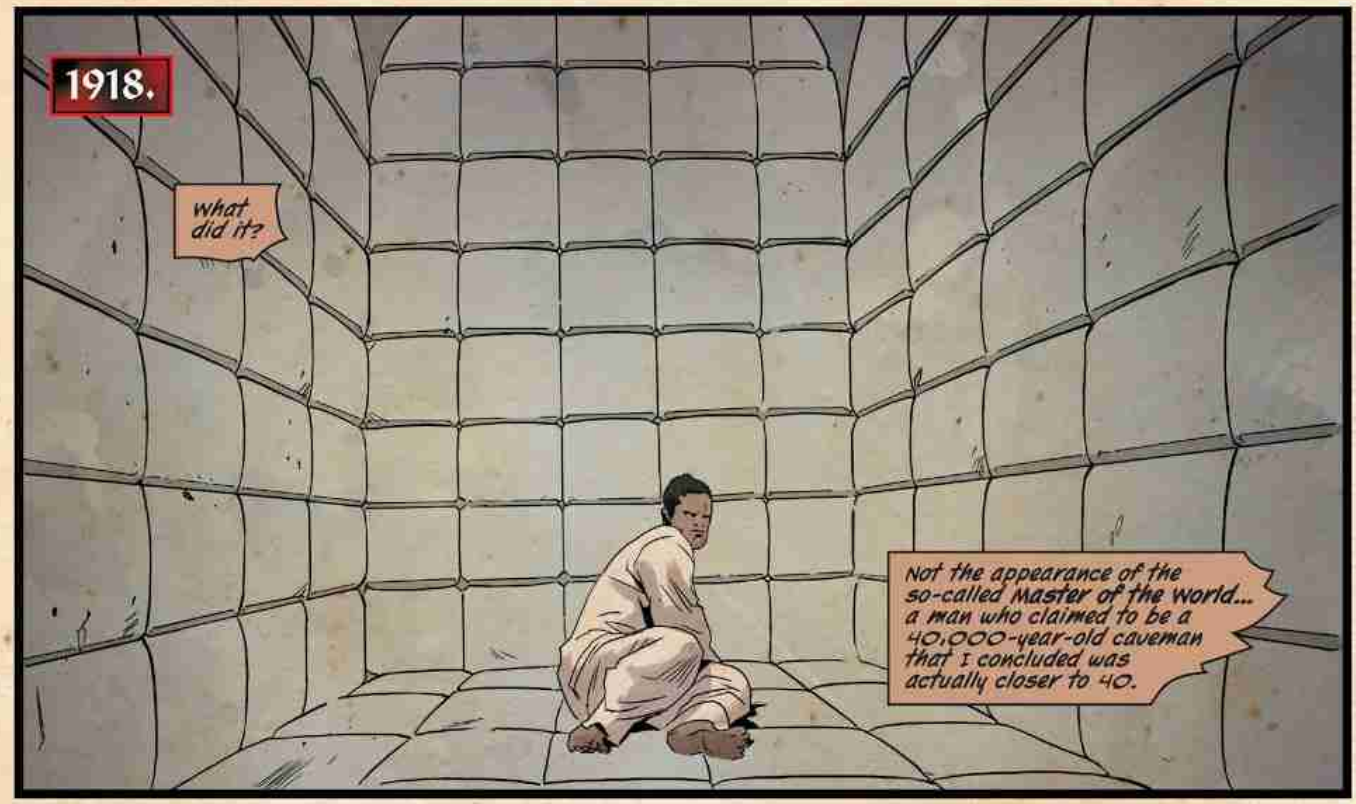
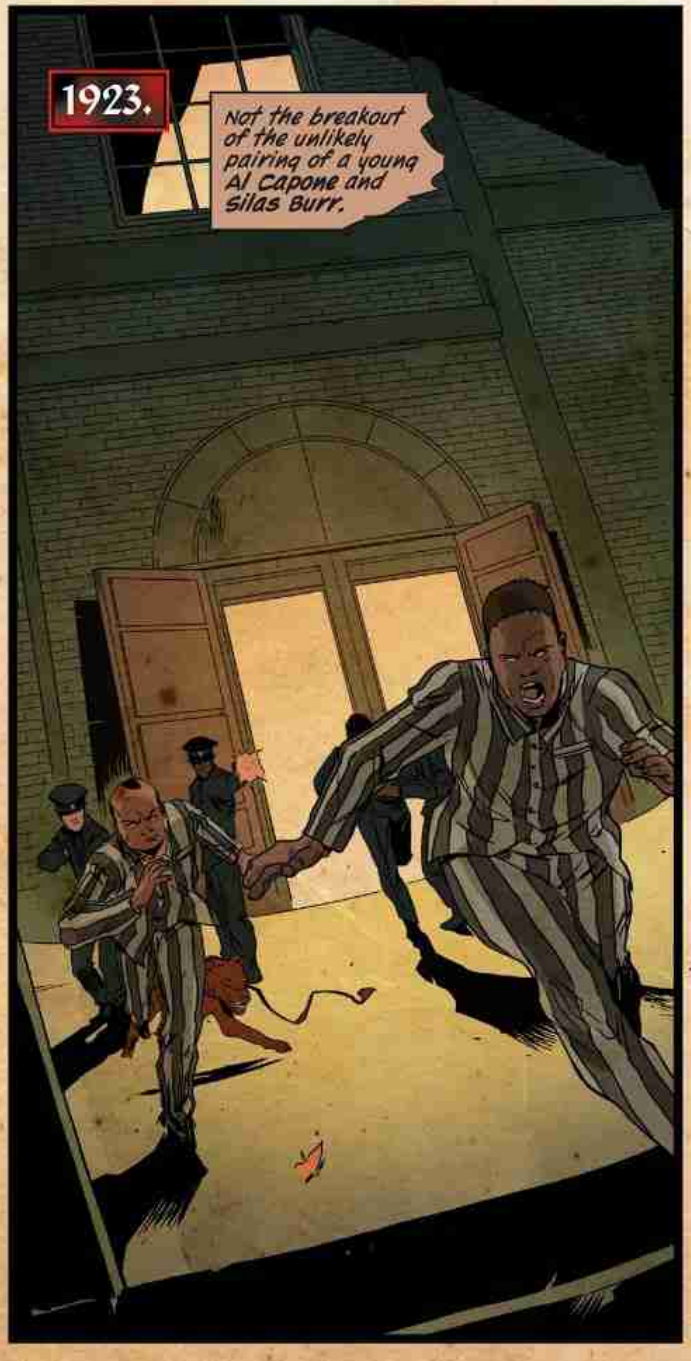

Time marches on for us all.
RAVENCROFT
It did for me.
It did for the Ravencroft Institute and its staff.
It did for my beliefs.
There was a point where I dismissed Dr. Claudia Russell's notion that the stories of the strange and fantastic that frequented the region surrounding the institute were nothing more than tall tales worthy only of a child's campfire.
Ultimately... I would come to think differently.


1918.
What did it?
Not the appearance of the so-called Master of the World... a man who claimed to be a 40,000-year-old caveman that I concluded was actually closer to 40.


1923.
Not the breakout of the unlikely pairing of a young Al Capone and Silas Burr.

1932.
Not even the arrival of the skin walker. I...still don't know exactly what he was supposed to be, even to this day.

No, all of those incidents, however unusual, could be explained away through conventional means.
It was the one that occurred on a crisp fall evening in 1933...
...that would make me a believer.
It was the one when I would meet a god of mischief.
GOOD EVENING, MORTAL FOOLS.

SO...YOU CAN EITHER RELEASE ME NOW OR STAND AROUND LOOKING AT EACH OTHER LIKE SLACK-JAWED MONKEYS AFTER I FREE MYSELF.
EITHER WAY IS PERFECTLY FINE WITH ME.

MR....UM, LOKI, WAS IT? I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND WE'RE ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU...
THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN HELP ME RIGHT NOW IS BY LOOKING AT YOUR OWN REFLECTION IN THE WINDOW.
I HONESTLY DON'T SEE HOW, BUT I'LL HUMOR YOU FOR THE...

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I only wish this enlightenment came years earlier...
When it came to Dr. Nathaniel Essex.
Though I had kept a closer eye on him and his practices after Dr. Russell's disappearance, it was around then that he moved on.
Germany, I had heard.
I know not if it was true or what work he did there. Frankly, I didn't care.
I only knew I was more than content to never see him again.
Still, as much as I hate to admit this...

...what came after his departure may actually have been worse.
1945.
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU INJECTING ME WITH? IT...
IT BURNS! MY GOD, IT BURNS!
MY EYES! MY--
SPLAT
SPLAT
AHHHHHH!

MY APOLOGIES, BARON BLOOD.
THAT...WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN.
I'M SORRY, BARON BLOOD.
UNFORTUNATELY THAT'S A PHRASE I'M GETTING ALL TOO USED TO HEARING FROM YOU, PROFESSOR THORTON.
PERHAPS MY DECISION TO DEFECT TO THE UNITED STATES AND JOIN YOUR PROGRAM WAS A BIT PREMATURE.

I AGREE WITH THE BARON. IF THESE ARE THE RESULTS THIS ALLIANCE WOULD PRODUCE...
...I MUST QUESTION WHETHER TO USE MY INFLUENCE OVER TRANSYLVANIA TO HAVE THEM ENTER THE WAR ON THE SIDE OF THE ALLIES.
LOOK, COUNT.
YOU'VE ASKED US FOR A PRETTY DAMNED TALL TASK HERE, OKAY? I MEAN...CURE VAMPIRES OF ALL THEIR WEAKNESSES?
CONSIDERING YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH THESE WEAKNESSES FOR CENTURIES, I WOULD THINK YOU'D BE A BIT MORE PATIENT AND UNDERSTAND THAT'S NOT A FIX THAT WILL HAPPEN OVERNIGHT.
BUT IF YOU DON'T FEEL THIS UNION IS BENEFICIAL TO BOTH PARTIES, BY ALL MEANS THROW IN WITH GERMANY INSTEAD. WHO, BY THE WAY, ARE IN THE PROCESS OF GETTING THEIR GOOSE-STEPPING BUTTS KICKED, IF YOU HADN'T NOTICED.
IF YOU THINK THE THIRD REICH CAN CURE YOU OF YOUR PHOTOSENSITIVITY, THEN DON'T LET ME STAND IN YO--
GLLK!
YOU DARE? YOU DARE TO SPEAK TO COUNT DRACULA IN SUCH A FASHION, YOU INSOLENT MEAT?
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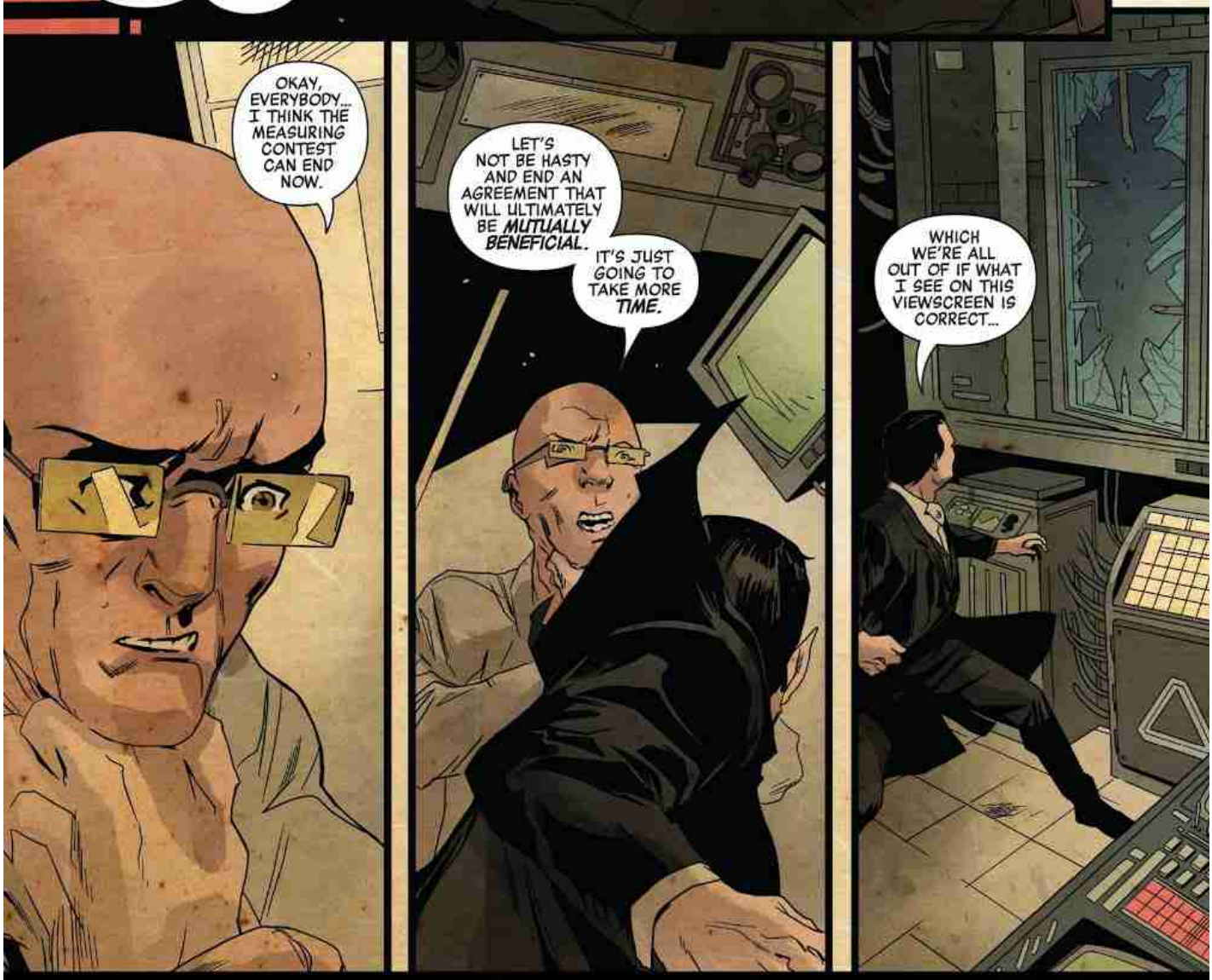
OKAY, EVERYBODY... I THINK THE MEASURING CONTEST CAN END NOW.
LET'S NOT BE HASTY AND END AN AGREEMENT THAT WILL ULTIMATELY BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.
IT'S JUST GOING TO TAKE MORE TIME.
WHICH WE'RE ALL OUT OF IF WHAT I SEE ON THIS VIEWSCREEN IS CORRECT...

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"...NOW THAT A CERTAIN STAR-SPANGLED INTERLOPER HAS JUST ENTERED THE EQUATION."
I HAVE TO SAY...BREAKING INTO A MENTAL HOSPITAL IS CERTAINLY NEW FOR US. I MEAN, I ALWAYS THOUGHT THE MAIN IDEA WAS TO STAY OUT, YOU KNOW?
CERTAINLY NOT THE WAY I LIKE TO DO THINGS, BUCK. BUT WE DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE IF WE'RE GOING TO SAVE BUD.
WHEN HIS WIFE CALLED AND TOLD ME WHAT HAD HAPPENED... I COULDN'T SAY NO.
BUD HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME...LOOKED OUT FOR ME WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
THE WAR EVENTUALLY GOT TO HIM, AND HE WAS SENT HERE FOR TREATMENT... HASN'T BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE.
SAY NO MORE, STEVE. WE'LL FIND HIM. I--
WHAT THE--? FOG...?

=KAF!=
=KAF!=
=KAF!=
...THAT IS SO MUCH MORE THAN WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE. FOR WHAT MERE FOG CAN TRANSFORM...
...INTO *DEATH ITSELF?*
GREAT. NOW COUNT DRACULA SHOWS UP. HECK, I MIGHT ACTUALLY CHECK *MYSELF* IN HERE WHEN THIS IS ALL SAID AND DONE.
GO FIND BUD. AND WHILE YOU DO THAT...
...I'LL HANDLE THIS.
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UNWANTED
Having founded the facility, I knew Ravencroft better than anyone. Every passage. every hidden corridor.
SO WHAT'D THEY DO TO THIS POOR SLOB?
Unfortunately I thought I knew my government just as well.
I was wrong.
I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
They came here, with their own doctors and scientists and programs for research, all in the name of the war effort. I soon realized it was much more than that.
I'M JUST GLAD IT AIN'T ME.
UNWANTED
BOY, DO I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. YOU EVER GET A GOOD LOOK AT SOME OF THOSE THINGS IN THERE?
My patients, the men and women of this facility who I had sworn an oath to help and protect, were being used as lab rats.
I TRY NOT TO. WINGS WHERE THERE SHOULDN'T BE WINGS. FANGS GOD KNOWS WHERE.
And I was too much of a coward to do anything about it.
ALL I KNOW IS WHATEVER THE HELL THOSE FREAKY MONSTROSITIES ARE...
Nathaniel Essex was the first symptom that something was wrong with the Ravencroft Facility. And now, that symptom had fully grown into a cancer.

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I needed to see to it that cancer was removed.
...THEY SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY.
WHAM
LT. WILLIAM "BUD" ADAMS. WHERE IS HE?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN ANY OF THESE CELLS YET BUT I GET THE FEELING IT'S SOMETHING YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO GET LOCKED IN WITH.
SO I'D ANSWER VERY CAREFULLY IF I WERE YOU.
TH-THERE.

CRRK
BUD? BUD, ARE YOU IN--
MY GOD.
PLEASE, WHOEVER YOU ARE...
KILL ME.

AN EASILY AVOIDABLE SHIELD?
HONESTLY, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE BARON HAS HAD SO MUCH TROUBLE WITH YOU OVER THE YEARS. YOU'RE JUST A MAN.
WHILE I AM VERY MUCH...
...NOT.
SCREEEECH!
GEE, YOU'RE GOING TO START TO HURT MY FEELINGS.

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OH, TRUST ME...
...I'M ABOUT TO HURT A LOT MORE THAN JUST THAT.
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
CLANG
REMEMBER THAT EASILY AVOIDABLE SHIELD?
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT, COUNT...
...I AM JUST A MAN.
BUT LUCKILY ONE THAT KNOWS A LITTLE BIT ABOUT STRATEGY--

ALL THE GOOD IT'LL DO YOU.
SLAM
I'M SORRY, CAP. I REALLY AM.
BUT AS MUCH AS THIS PAINS ME-- AFTER ALL, YOU CAME FROM ONE OF OUR EARLIER PROGRAMS-- WE JUST CAN'T HAVE YOU BLABBING ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE SEEN HERE, SO...
SO HE WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM MUCH LONGER. FAREWELL, MY OLD FOE.
MAYBE NOT QUITE YET.
RAVENCROFT? PLEASE. WE'VE TOLERATED YOU BECAUSE WE'VE HAD TO.
NOW GET LOST BEFORE I DECIDE MY TOLERANCE HAS COME TO AN END.
I'VE BEEN QUIET FOR TOO LONG. ALLOWED TOO MUCH TO HAPPEN HERE.
I WAS WEAK AND AFRAID. BUT NO LONGER. YOU CAME HERE AND TOOK OVER MY FACILITY, RUINING IT WITH YOUR CLANDESTINE EXPERIMENTS.
BUT IF YOU AND YOUR GOVERNMENT GOONS WANT EXPERIMENTS...

...THEN HAVE THEM.
I realized how much harm my facility had brought. The madness I have let into my institute. My earnest intentions to help have done nothing but hinder the healing of these patients.
These men have created monsters in my name.
I choose not to let this be my legacy any longer.
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BLAM
BLAM
AHHHHHHH!
BLAM
MASTER... I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO GO.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
DEAR GOD, PLEASE DON'T-- ARGGGH!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
OH NO, WHERE DO YOU TWO THINK YOU'RE--
STEVE, THERE'S NO TIME. WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE OURSELVES. THE WHOLE PLACE HAS GONE TO HELL.
BLAM
BLAM
BUD? WHERE'S BUD?
I'M SORRY, STEVE. HE...
HE DIDN'T MAKE IT.

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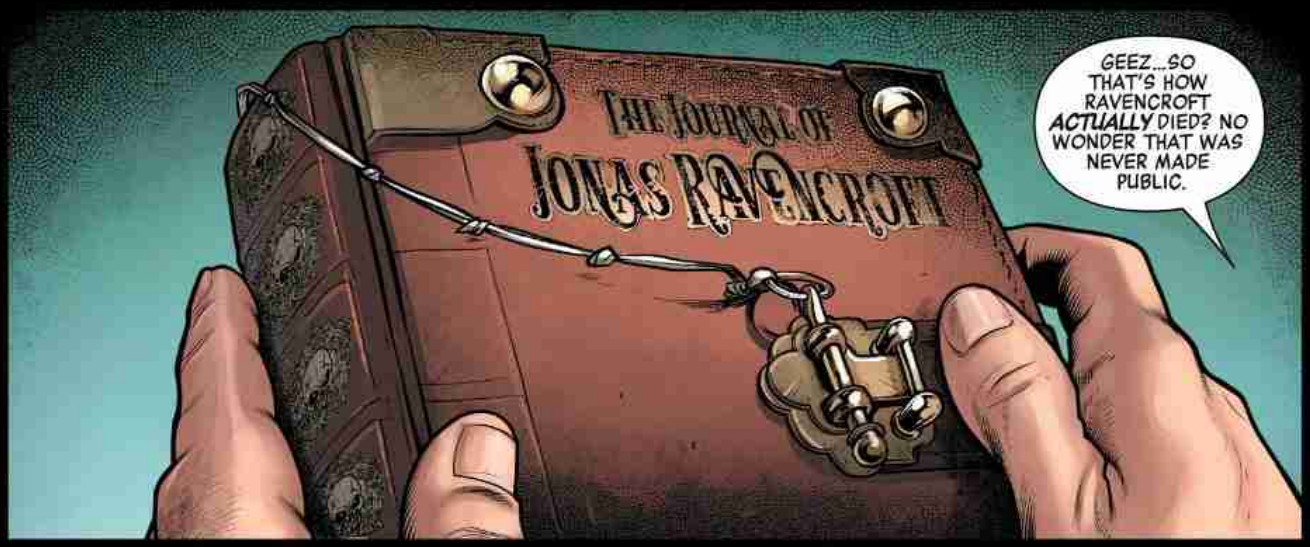

NO WONDER NONE OF THIS WAS MADE PUBLIC. SECRET EXPERIMENTS, ALLIANCES WITH VAMPIRES...
AND NONE OF IT HELPS US FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE UNWANTED. HOW'D THEY END UP IN THEIR CELL BACK THEN? AND HOW THE HELL DID THEY JUST UP AND DISAPPEAR FROM IT JUST A FEW DAYS AGO?

I DON'T KNOW. NOT THAT ANY OF THIS INFORMATION STOPPED THE REBUILD. HERE WE ARE IN RAVENCROFT... A NEW FACILITY OVER THE OLD ONE, STATE OF THE ART, BRAND SPANKING NEW.
THE SHOW MUST GO ON.

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I KNOW THIS IS ALL ABOVE MY PAY GRADE, BUT IF IT WAS UP TO ME, I WOULDN'T HAVE MOVED ALL THESE INMATES AT THE SAME--
WELL, WELL, WELL...
IF IT ISN'T THE BIG BAD WOLF HIMSELF. WANT TO SEE WHAT BIG TEETH I HAVE?
CHOMP
YOU'RE GONNA BE SPITTING OUT THOSE BIG TEETH COURTESY OF MY BIG METAL FIST IF YOU DON'T KEEP WALKING, HYDE.
OOOOH... SAUCY.
WELL, I'D SAY WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US HERE...
YES...
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I'D SAY WE CERTAINLY DO.
NORMAN OSBORN?! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OR, MORE ACCURATELY... WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU IN A CAGE WITH THE REST OF 'EM, YOU PSYCHO?
OH. I SUPPOSE YOU DIDN'T HEAR. I WAS GIVEN A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH AFTER ALL OF THAT NASTY CARNAGE BUSINESS. MIND-CONTROLLED AS I WAS, YOU SEE.
I'VE BEEN HIRED HERE AS A CONSULTANT, WHAT WITH MY HISTORY WITH THIS PLACE AND WORKING WITH THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.
NICE TO BE WORKING WITH YOU, JAMESON.
RAVENCROFT INSTITUTE FOR THE CRIMINAL INSANE
MISTY, HOW DOES THAT PHRASE ABOUT HISTORY AND BEING DOOMED TO REPEAT IT GO AGAIN?
To be continued... in Ravencroft #1!
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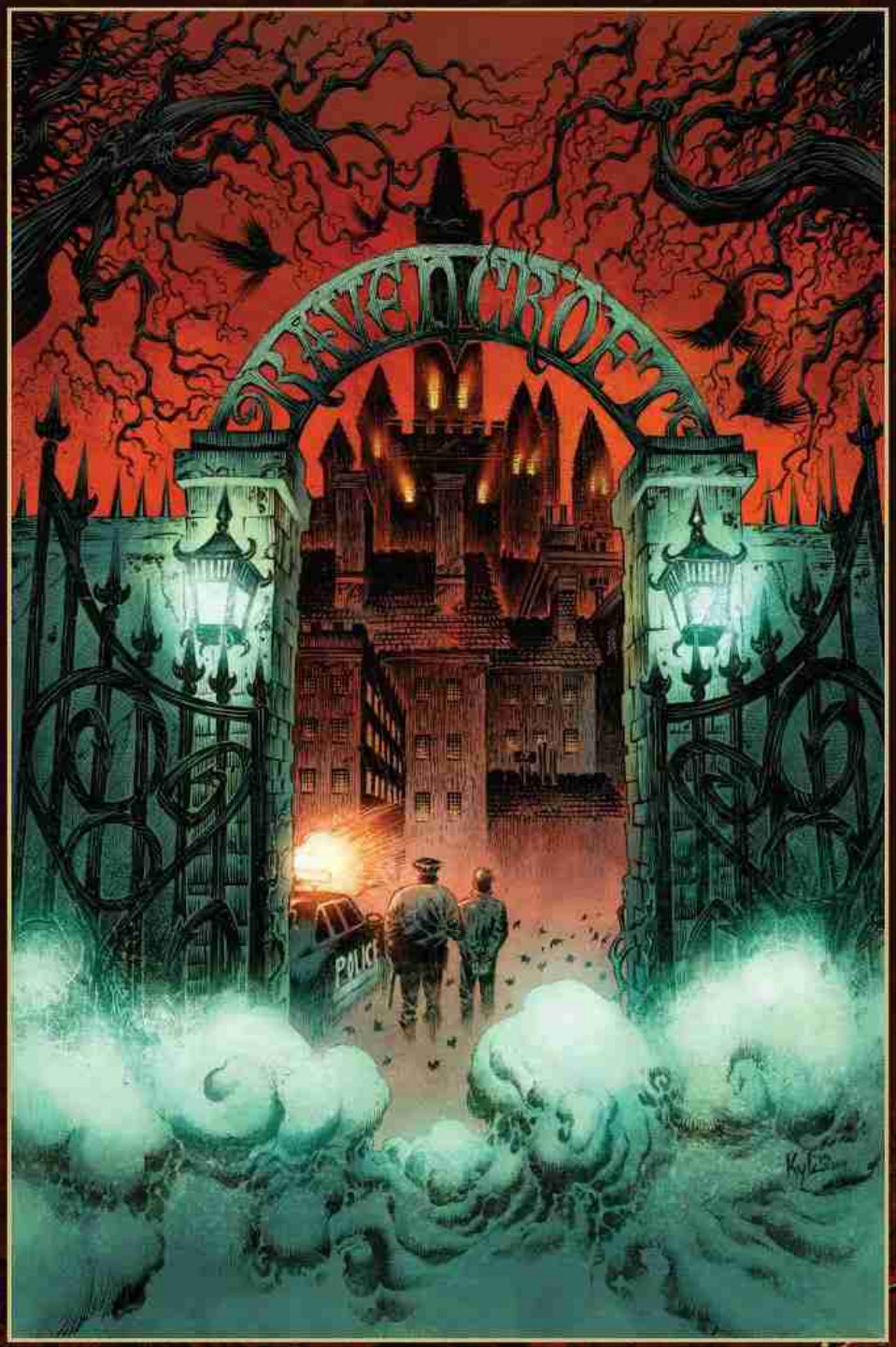
NEXT



RAVENCROFT #1
ON SALE JANUARY 2020

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BULLPEN BU

STAN'S SOAPBOX
FEBRUARY 1980

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Bear with me, gang. It's philosophy time again! I was having a discussion the other day with a professor pal of mine from U.C.L.A. about the so-called "generation gap," and I laid a few personal opinions on him that I'd like to share with you.

First, we're never gonna solve the generation gap till we stop seeking the wrong answers to the wrong questions. Every one yaps about young people being "different" nowadays. Forget it! Human nature doesn't change. It's the human condition that changes—it's the environment! What's happened to us is, the *world* has been wildly changing, producing new sets of rules each time you blink your eye. It's the social climate that's been changing, not you 'n me, Bunky!

Here, this'll show what I mean. Say you've got two homes, a large country estate and a small city apartment. You play your stereo full blast on your estate, but who cares? No one can hear it. You're not disturbing anyone. But play it just as loud in your small apartment with the paper thin walls and your neighbors wanna clobber you! You haven't changed. You're the same yoyo in both places. But the conditions are different!

The fact is, young people are the same as ever, the same noisy, scroungy, mangy, nutty, wonderful crazies they've always been — and adults are still the same grouchy, grunchy, goopy, hard-pressed and harassed heroes *they've* always been —and which you'll soon become! Nothing's changed but the labels. Which leads to point #2 —

None of us is all that different from each other. We all want essentially the same things outta life — a measure of security, some fun, some romance, friendship, and the respect of our contemporaries. That goes for Indians, Chinese, Russians, Jews, Arabs, Catholics, Protestants, blacks, browns, whites, and green-skinned Hulks. So why don't we all stop wasting time hating the "other" guys. Just look in the mirror, mister — that other guy is you!

Excelsior!

Stan

STAN LEE
FOREVER

HE STRIKES FROM OUTER SPACE--

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